

BOSADI:

A PRAYER FOR WOMEN, A MIRROR FOR THE NATION



BEYOND THE GRANT

At Hyde Park Corner, Johannesburg, the atmosphere was electric with quiet reverence as acclaimed author and medical doctor, Dr Kopano Matlwa took her seat in conversation with journalist Cathy Mohlahlana. The setting, framed by shelves lined with copies of *Bosadi* and bathed in soft light, became a sanctuary of reflection, storytelling, and womanhood.

As the audience leaned in, Dr Matlwa's words filled the space with the calm assurance of someone who writes not just to tell stories, but to heal. "*Bosadi* is a prayer for women," she said. "It's an act of naming our joy and our pain and finally giving both permissions to exist."

That evening, *Bosadi* became more than a book launch, it was a national moment of reflection. Supported through the NIHSS Working Group Programme, *Bosadi*, meaning *womanhood in Setswana and Sesotho*, takes its place among the most urgent works of contemporary African literature.



DR KOPANO MATLWA

"English doesn't do it justice," Dr Matlwa told journalist Cathy Mohlahlana during their on-stage conversation. *Bosadi* is a profound contribution to the Humanities, a literary and spiritual exploration of what it means to live, love, and believe as a woman in South Africa today. This choice to keep the title in vernacular is deliberate and radical. It insists that African languages are not mere vessels of translation but sites of philosophy and power. In doing so, Dr Matlwa echoes the NIHSS mission: to restore African languages and lived experience to the heart of national thought.

A Story of Faith, Silence, and Endurance

Through the eyes of Naledi, a woman living between the sacred and the secular, Bosadi invites readers into an interior world shaped by expectation, faith, and endurance. Naledi's journey unfolds quietly but unflinchingly, navigating marriage, motherhood, and the silences that often accompany both. The novel's emotional range is vast: grief sits beside grace; prayer becomes protest; love and exhaustion share the same table. Dr Matlwa captures the subtle rhythms of domestic life, the thud of a washing machine, the scent of church polish, the whispered prayers that carry generations forward.

Religion as Reckoning

In Bosadi, religion is not a refuge but a reckoning. Dr Matlwa draws on her own experience as a doctor and believer to explore the ways faith and feminism collide, and, sometimes, heal one another.

"When I write," she reflected, "I'm in conversation with God. Writing is how I wrestle with the questions I can't answer in any other way."

That blend of spirituality and rebellion defines Bosadi: a book that treats vulnerability as strength, silence as resistance, and storytelling as salvation.

A Literary Legacy of Reflection and Renewal

With each book, Dr Kopano Matlwa has chronicled the inner life of post-apartheid South Africa. From Coconut's meditation on identity to Period Pain's portrayal of faith amid suffering, her work has consistently asked what it means to live, and hope, in the aftermath of struggle.

Now, with Bosadi, Dr Matlwa turns inward. The writing is more contemplative, more distilled, and profoundly empathetic. It signals a new chapter in her authorship, one that fuses theology, psychology, and African humanism. She has hinted that her next projects may explore women's spiritual leadership and the inheritance of silence in African households, a continuation of the themes that make Bosadi so resonant.





A Mirror to the Nation

At a time when South Africa grapples with gender-based violence, moral fatigue, and the daily cost of resilience, *Bosadi* feels like an answered prayer. It reminds us that transformation begins not in institutions but in language, in the stories we tell about what it means to be human.

For the NIHSS, supporting a project like *Bosadi* affirms that the Humanities are not a luxury. They are the country's conscience. Through literature, we do not just describe our world, we remake it. Dr Matlwa's work embodies that calling.

Hosted by Jacana Media in collaboration with Zebra Square, Exclusive Books, and the NIHSS, the *Bosadi* launch gathered readers, academics, and cultural practitioners in a shared spirit of gratitude and recognition. The audience's questions lingered long after the applause: How do we hold each other better? How do we raise sons and daughters differently? How do we create space for women to be whole?

These are not just literary questions; they are social imperatives, and they are the kind of questions NIHSS-supported voices continue to place at the centre of national conversation.

A medical doctor, social advocate, and multi-award-winning novelist, Dr Kopano Matlwa has emerged as one of South Africa's most vital cultural voices. Her debut, *Coconut*, won the European Union Literary Award; *Spilt Milk* and *Period Pain* cemented her reputation for blending social critique with spiritual introspection.

The Humanities as a living Practice

With *Bosadi*, Dr Matlwa offers her most personal work yet, one that reimagines womanhood not as endurance but as evolution. Through the Working Group Programmes, the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences continues to invest in authors and publishers who bring scholarly depth and emotional truth to public life. By supporting works such as *Bosadi*, the NIHSS underscores its belief that the Humanities are not confined to lecture halls, they live in novels, in conversations, and in the courage to tell the truth beautifully.

Bosadi is available through Jacana Media and Exclusive Books. Readers, educators, and book clubs are encouraged to use it as a catalyst for dialogue on womanhood, faith, and cultural identity. Follow the NIHSS for updates on projects that shape the Humanities and Social Sciences in South Africa. Visit www.nihss.ac.za.

Bosadi is not merely a novel, it is a mirror, a hymn, and a homecoming. Through it, Dr Kopano Matlwa gifts South Africa the rarest kind of literature: the kind that makes a nation stop, listen, and feel again. And through its continued support of work like this, the NIHSS affirms its role as the custodian of voices that move the nation, voices that turn empathy into understanding and understanding into change.

